BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

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tel (250) 387-0327
fax (250) 387-0329

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Market

- **Average weekly earnings in British Columbia edged up slightly (+0.3%, seasonally adjusted) in March, to $618.** Nationally, average weekly earnings were unchanged from the previous month, at $608. Earnings rose only marginally in most parts of the country. Nova Scotia (+1.2%, to $507), posted the largest gain. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The number of regular employment insurance (EI) recipients in the province increased 1.8%, to 67,880 (seasonally adjusted), in March.** Across the country, the number of EI recipients was down 0.3%, to 546,950, but this was almost entirely due to a 4.8% drop in the number of recipients in Ontario. Every other region except NWT (-1.5%) and Nova Scotia (where there was no change) registered increases, ranging from 0.2% in Quebec to 10.9% in Yukon. BC's 1.8% increase was among the lowest in the country. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Older Workers

- **Participation rates for older workers in Canada have been declining steadily since 1976.** Between 1976 and 1997, the percentage of Canadians aged 55 to 64 who were either working or actively looking for employment dropped from 53.5% to 48.4%. This occurred despite an increase in the number of older women taking part in the workforce. The participation rate for older women rose from 31.8% to 36.5% between 1976 and 1997. Among men, it fell from 76.7% to 60.6% during the same period. Pension plans which allow workers to take earlier retirement are viewed as a likely reason for lower participation rates in the 1970s and 1980s. However, there are some indications that the continued decline during the 1990s may be occurring because older workers are at a slightly higher risk of involuntary layoff than those in the "core" age group (25 to 54). Job losses in the 1990s for older men were concentrated in a few industries, most notably public administration.
Source: SC, Catalogue71-005-XPB

- **The trend in British Columbia runs contrary to the national experience.** Although BC's overall participation rate (64.9% in 1997) was very close to the national average (64.8%), older people in BC were more likely to be in the labour force than other Canadians in the same age group. More than half (51.9%) of British Columbians aged 55 to 64 were in the labour force, compared to 48.4% of all Canadians.
Source: Statistics Canada, BC STATS

- **The percentage of older workers (aged 55 to 64) in BC's labour force has risen slightly, from 50.4% in 1976 to 51.9% last year.** BC is the only province where this has occurred: in the rest of Canada, the overall participation rate for workers in this age group has fallen. This is due to a combination of factors: in BC, the participation rate of older men has dropped much less rapidly than in the country as a whole. At the same time, the participation rate of older women has increased about twice as much as in all of Canada. In 1997, 63.7% of older men, and 39.8% of older women, in the province were in the labour force. *Source: Statistics Canada, BC STATS*

Agriculture

- **Cash receipts from farming operations in British Columbia edged up 1.2% in the first quarter of the year.** Crop receipts were down 12.5%, but this was offset by a 10.4% increase in receipts from livestock sales.
Source: Statistics Canada

Report **Gender equality**

Did you know...?
One in three older workers is self-employed.

- **The average wages of hired agricultural workers in British Columbia dropped slightly (-1.1%) in 1997, to $10.05 per hour.** Alberta ($10.22) was the only province where farm wages were higher. However, average hourly earnings for all industries in BC were the highest in the country ($16.75), and farm workers in BC earned only 60% of the all-industry average. The Canadian ratio was 64% ($9.50 per hour, compared to an all-industry wage of $14.87). Relative to other hourly paid workers, farm workers were best off in Alberta (72%) and Saskatchewan (71%). Farm workers have been making gains: in 1994, they earned only 58% of the all-industry average for BC. Across the country, the ratio was 62%. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Farmers in British Columbia bucked a nationwide trend, as net farm income in the province increased 69% to $109 million in 1997.** Net farm income measures the receipts and expenses relating to calendar year production of crops and livestock. Nationally, the net income of farmers fell 55% last year, to $1.8 billion. Income declined in all provinces except BC and Newfoundland (+8%). Leading the decline were farmers in Saskatchewan, who recorded an overall net loss of $79 million last year, after earning $1.2 billion in 1996. This was the first time since 1988 that Saskatchewan farmers have not earned enough to meet their crop production expenses. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Family Violence

- **In 1996, there were 21,901 incidents of spousal assault reported to the police in Canada.** Of these, 89% involved female victims and 11% were against male victims. Seven in ten incidents of spousal assault involved a current spouse. Men (32%) were slightly more likely than women (28%) to be assaulted by an estranged or former spouse rather than a person with whom they were currently in a relationship. Men were more likely to be victims of more serious types of crimes (22%, compared to 12% of women). Women (46%) who committed assaults were twice as likely as men (21%) to use a weapon. However, in cases where weapons were involved, female victims were more likely to be injured (58%) than males (12%). Eighty percent of men, and 90% of women, victimized by spousal assaults laid charges against their assailant. *Source: SC, Catalogue 85-224*

- **In 1996, there were 2,427 violent crimes against seniors (aged 65 and over) reported to the police.** While the majority of these crimes were perpetrated by people outside the family, one in five involved a family member. Older men were most likely to be victimized by their adult children (59%), followed by a spouse or ex-spouse (18%). Among older women, the accused was usually a spouse (42%) or a child (37%). Siblings were accused in 15% of cases involving men and 11% of cases involving women. *Source: SC, Catalogue 85-224*

- **Spousal homicides are often preceded by a history of family violence.** In 56% of spousal homicides between 1991 and 1996, there was a history of domestic violence. A history of family violence was slightly more common in cases where males were killed by their wives (61%) than in those where women were the victims (55%). Twenty-six percent of homicides involving children and 24% of those where the victim was elderly, were preceded by domestic violence. *Source: SC, Catalogue 85-224*

The Nation

- **The federal government posted a moderate surplus of $63 million last year, after recording a $1.8 billion deficit in 1996/97**. An 8.8% increase in tax revenues contributed to the improvement. Expenditures declined 2.6% in total, as both program spending (-2.7%) and public debt interest payments (-2.3%) fell. Transfers to individuals edged up 0.5%, to $34.1 billion. Subsidies and other transfers also rose (+0.9%). Offsetting these increases were lower transfers to other levels of government (-11.3%), a 12.4% cut in payments to crown corporations, and a marginal drop (-0.2%) in departmental expenditures. The national debt stood at $467.0 billion, down 2.1% from 476.7 billion a year earlier. *Source: Federal Department of Finance, Fiscal Monitor*

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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

Infoline Report:

May 29, 1998

Gender Economic Equality – Has there been progress in BC?

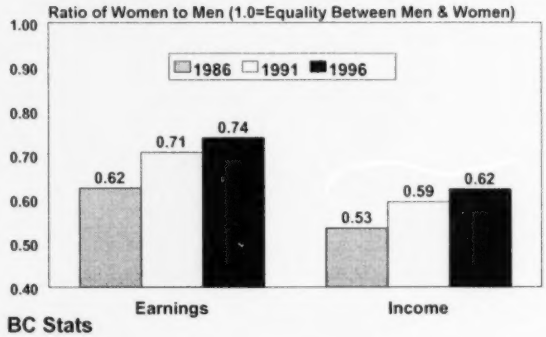
Originally published in January 1998 issue of *Earnings & Employment Trends*. Annual subscription is $60 + GST

The most common measure used to evaluate women's progress toward economic equality with men is an indicator of comparative female/male **earnings.** Average earnings of full-time/full-year workers are expressed as a ratio, that is, the earnings of women divided by the earnings of men. This ratio is known as the "Earnings Gender Index". When men and women with similar work patterns earn the same average annual salary, the ratio will equal 1.0. The "distance" the ratio is from 1.0, is considered an indicator of gender workplace inequality.

Another measure used to gauge gender economic equality is the average **total income** of men and women. Total income includes earnings but also income from other sources such as investment income, alimony/child support payments, transfer payments from government, etc. Once more, the equality index is expressed as a ratio of women to men, where 1.0 equals equality. This "Total Income Gender Index" is used as a standard of women's/men's relative economic independence.

Gender Economic Equality

According to the Usual Measurements of Earnings and Total Income, the Gender Gap Is Closing



BC has shown considerable improvement in both these indicators over the past 10 years. Both ratios are moving, albeit slowly, towards 1.0.

There is a further economic measure which indicates an individual's "standard of living". Standard of living is determined by household income. When a household has an income that is substantially below other similarly sized households, then all members of the household are considered to have low income. What is considered "substantially below" is an income level defined by Statistics Canada as the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO).

Using this concept to compare men's and women's relative standards of living, an index is constructed that measures the per cent of women who live above the LICO divided by the per cent of men who live above the LICO. The result gives an indication of the relative standards of living of men and women and how that has changed over time.

Gender Economic Equality

The "Standard of Living" Gender Gap, as Measured by the % Living Above the LICO, Shows No Longterm Improvement

The standard of living gap actually increased between 1991 and 1996 despite the positive gains in women's incomes. To understand how this could happen, we examine other factors that effect the overall standing of men and women.

The proportion of men who have a standard of living above the LICO has always been higher than that of women. As men and women living together are assumed to have the same standard of living, it is the incomes of the non-attached men and women which dictate the differences in the LICO Gender Index. The two most significant groups that effect this index are seniors and single mothers.

BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BC.Stats@gems8.gov.bc.ca

Among Seniors, Women's Standard of Living is considerably lower than Men's

Many seniors, particularly women over the age of 80, have incomes below the LICO. Seniors' standards of living vary according to conditions such as whether they are entitled to receive CPP (many women of that generation are not), or whether they live with a spouse (more and more senior women are living on their own). In 1996, one in four senior women were living below the LICO which is more than double the rate for senior men.

When the gender standard of living gap is so much more pronounced among seniors than other age groups, the overall gap will have a tendency to increase in the future as seniors become an ever increasing proportion of the population.

More than half of Single Mothers and their children Live Below the LICO

An increase in the number of single mothers will widen the standard of living gap. Ironically, the income gender gap can show improvement over time coincident with a deteriorating standard of living gap. For example, one year a woman is living with her husband and children and earning nothing, and then the next year she becomes a single mother, receives child support payments, and may be forced to join the workforce. Her personal income will register an improvement, thus improving the "total income" gender gap while at the same time her family income and standard of living would have dropped, having the effect of worsening the LICO gender gap.

The number of single mothers increased significantly between 1991 and 1996 growing by 30 per cent compared to 12 per cent among two parent families. This social structure change explains at least part of the fall in women's relative standard of living in the 1991/96 period.

In conclusion, earnings and income differences between men and women continue to be important indicators of gender economic equality. However, these measures by themselves leave out an important aspect of men's and women's economic reality -- that is family life and the sharing of incomes and workloads between partners. Therefore, it is important to monitor some additional measure that captures comparative "standards of living" between the sexes.

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Add some *depth* to your understanding of BC labour market & social issues

BC STATS publishes two periodicals and a number of statistical reports designed to provide both information and insight into the British Columbia labour market. Individual copies and paper subscriptions are available as well as a "blanket" subscription to electronic versions on our Internet site. Electronic access provides tremendous savings and quicker access. If you wish to view sample reports, from our home page choose "Services and Products". Then choose "About our printed reports". Our site is at:

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

To learn more or to order an item, contact

Kris Ovens at tel (250) 387-0359 / fax (250) 387-0380 / e-mail Kris.Ovens@gems7.gov.bc.ca

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fax transmission information service from **BC STATS**

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jan 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	3,950.7	1.7
Canada	30,425.3	1.0
GDP and INCOME		% change on
(BC - at market prices)	1997	one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	109,347	3.3
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	98,201	2.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	25,039	0.2
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	16,515	-2.3
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Mar	2,841	-4.1
Merchandise Exports (raw) Mar	2,086	-12.1
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Mar	2,681	-0.4
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	Apr '98	one year ago
BC	109.8	0.2
Canada	108.3	0.8
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Apr '98	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,035	1.4
Employed - BC	1,847	1.2
Unemployed - BC	188	3.1
		Apr '97
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	9.3	9.1
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	8.4	9.5
INTEREST RATES (percent)	May 27/98	May 28/97
Prime Business Rate	6.50	4.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.55	5.40
- 5 year	6.95	7.35
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	May 27/98	May 28/97
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4565	1.3837
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.6866	0.7227
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Mar '98	one year ago
BC	615.40	1.4
Canada	607.26	2.0

SOURCES:
Gross Domestic Product: Statistics Canada, revised by BC STATS
Population, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings: Statistics Canada
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

Socio-Economic Profiles

BC STATS has just completed the annual update of ***Socio-Economic Statistical Profiles***. Included in the publication are 4-page profiles of each and every development region and regional district in the province. Individual region profiles provide a set of consistent and comparable data with one page each devoted to demographic, economic and social issues. The introductory page for each region contains a region map and an inset showing the location within the province. At the province level there is a more detailed 8-page profile showing how the various characteristics are experienced in the development regions. A series of background statistical tables round out the publication. Copies may be ordered for $150 plus GST.

Undecided about whether you need a copy? See, on our Internet site, a 4-page region profile taken directly from the new publication:

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/lss/socec/socpage.htm

If you wish to know more about the publication or to order a copy, please contact Kris Ovens at

(250) 387-0359 tel
(250) 387-0380 fax

Kris.Ovens@gems7.gov.bc.ca

Released this week by BC STATS

- Exports, March 1998
- Business Indicators, May 1998
- Current Statistics, May 1998

Next week

- No subscription releases

BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BC.Stats@gems8.gov.bc.ca